

Private Gavin Elliott
2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Private Gavin Elliott of 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment was killed in Afghanistan on Thursday 3 September 2009.

Private Elliott was operating with The Light Dragoons Battle Group when he died as a result of a gunshot wound sustained whilst on a foot patrol in Babaji district, central Helmand province.

On the day he lost his life, Gavin was in his familiar position as point man on a clearance operation when his call sign came under close quarter attack from insurgents. Gavin was shot and fatally wounded. Despite the best efforts of his platoon to quickly extract him from the scene for subsequent evacuation by helicopter, the injuries were too severe and he passed away en route to hospital.

Private Gavin Elliott joined A (Grenadier) Company, 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters & Foresters), in October 2007 after attending basic training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick. Having been voted 'Soldiers' Soldier' by his peers, he was honoured with a sailing trip around the Canary Islands for this worthy achievement.

Pte Elliott joined the Battalion whilst on Public Duties in Hounslow before moving to Northern Ireland. It was from Belfast that he deployed to Jamaica on Exercise RUM PUNCH where he earned his spurs as a MERCIAN soldier in the testing Jungle environment. After moving to B Company he began build-up training for the Battalion's deployment to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 10, attached to The Light Dragoons Battle Group.

Gavin was known as 'Billy' Elliott to his mates across the battalion with whom he shared many good times. He was renowned for always being the first one on the dance floor and always up for a laugh; but when it came to the business of being a soldier he would always stoically work hard for his comrades. Just as he was known during basic training, he was known in the Battalion for all the traits that distinguish a thoroughly professional soldier.

During their tour of Afghanistan, B Company were instrumental in all major operations, in particular Operation Panther's Claw. Gavin found himself tested by some of the fiercest fighting the British have experienced since deploying to Helmand Province. In every respect this tested the mettle and bravery of everyone involved and Gavin in every respect remained the soldiers' soldier. He regularly insisted on going 'point man' to act as the eyes and ears of the patrol and always took the lead in the search for Improvised Explosive Devices. More than any other, in spite of the relentless and harsh climatic conditions of the Green Zone, Gavin would lie on his stomach tenaciously carrying out nervous fingertip searches of the dust and dirt uncovering countless number of these malicious explosive devices buried in the ground. His bravery was

an inspiration.

Pte Elliott lived by the phrase: "Learn from yesterday; Live for today; Hope for tomorrow."

Born on 30 October 1989, in Woodsetts, Worksop, North Derbyshire, Gavin had a younger brother, Joshua, and older sister, Rebecca. He spoke of his family very fondly and regularly travelled home from Northern Ireland to spend time with them. He leaves behind his mother and father, Jayne and James, as well as brother and sister Joshua and Rebecca.

Lieutenant Colonel Simon Banton, Commanding Officer 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment, said:

"The austere conditions in which soldiers in Helmand live and work are enough to test the resolve of any man; to endure these conditions with the zest for life and good humour for which Gavin was known are testament to a great man and a great soldier. Gavin was professional, hardworking and a man in whom you had the utmost confidence. He never shied from danger and in the fiercest of battles you took comfort from knowing he was with you, side-by-side, and sharing the danger.

"Gavin was developing as a leader of men and I have no doubt he had a successful career ahead of him. The British Army is lucky that men of Gavin's calibre are among us. We will miss him greatly but our loss is nothing to the devastation of his family. Stand easy brother, your duty is done."

Lieutenant Colonel Gus Fair, Commanding Officer of The Light Dragoons Battle Group, said:

"Private Elliott was the epitome of a professional soldier. Quiet, hardworking and loyal, he was an asset to his Platoon, Company and the Battle Group. Despite being a junior soldier, he possessed both maturity and intuition; characteristics that were both appreciated and respected by those who were lucky enough to be in his company. Throughout Op PANCHAI PALANG, he never waned in the face of the enemy; as a Underslung Grenade Launcher gunner and point man, he knew the risks which came with that role and yet never complained, simply cracking on with the task at hand demonstrating his bravery, courage and skill to the end.

"The Battle Group is less for the loss of this remarkable young soldier and his memory will never be forgotten. Our thoughts and prayers go to his family and friends and members of his platoon at this very difficult time."

Major Jez Jerome, Officer Commanding B Company, said:

"Gav Elliott was one of the brightest stars in B Company. He was universally liked and respected by all. His ability and pride in his own professionalism were clear to all those who met him. He was the kind of soldier you enjoy having under your command and I will remember him fondly. His professionalism was exemplar and will endure in the company as we enter the last phase of our tour.

"It was evident to all that Gav was especially proud of what he achieved whilst in Afghanistan and his personal achievements and growth during the tour were a privilege to witness. All of the Company's thoughts and prayers are with his family at this difficult time, he will be missed by all. We as the men of B Company, 2 MERCIAN, are proud to have known him and are proud to count him as a brother soldier."

Platoon Commander, Captain Johnny Paulin, said:

"Gav Elliott was, without exception, the most professional private soldier that I have had the privilege to command in my six years of army service. His enthusiasm proved infectious throughout the deployment. He was loved by all his comrades and his sense of humour and positive attitude made him a pleasure to work alongside. I have no doubt that some of his actions saved the lives of his comrades over the recent months. His loss is a significant blow to the Company and the Battalion. Our heartfelt thoughts are with his family and friends."

Company Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Class 2 Paul Muckle, said:

"In my 16 years of service I have never met a soldier like Private Gavin Elliott; professional to the last, always smiling and never backing down from the tasks he was set. He was a real character who lifted the spirits of people around him. He will be very sadly missed but never forgotten. Mine and the thoughts and prayers of B Company go out to his family and friends at this difficult time. RIP."

Platoon Sergeant Adam Townsend said:

"Private Gav Elliott - also known as Steve (due to looking like a pirate after Op Panther's Claw with his bandana on and a beard) - was a pleasure to work with. He was always up for the task ahead of him and thought of others before himself. When the chips were down, he would always volunteer to be point man without a moan and carry out the duty to a high standard finding a number of IEDs which saved many lives within my Platoon and B Company. I am going to miss Gav greatly due to his professionalism. Gav had the potential to make a great leader of men."

Section Commander Corporal Mark Ingram said:

"Gav Elliott was a quality lad. He would constantly put himself forward and always did more than his share of the work. Always showing a good sense of humour, I never heard him moan or complain ever. Everyone loved him for the all round quality bloke he was. He would get on with everyone; no-one had a bad word to say about him. He was the best worker within the platoon and would keep the morale of the other blokes always on a high. He will be sadly missed."

Private Adam Rollinson, Private Ben Smith, Private Daniel Holgate, 5 Platoon, B Company, 2 Mercian said:

"Gav, our comrade, but most importantly our good friend will be missed but never forgotten by all of his friends he served so well with. A keen bloke, he never backed down from any

challenge given to him. When other people were down he would always be smiling, lifting others around him. We always felt safe having Gav lead us no matter where we were or what was happening around us and we will all still feel safe knowing he is still watching over us. In our hearts forever."